



Sustainability becomes more important in wellness tourism

Guests show growing environmental awareness

Sustainability has become a growing issue in Germany: In 2009, consumers again spent more on organic products than in the year before, and a staggering 94% of all households also bought organic food, says a recent study by German market research company (Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung GfK 2010). Germans proclaim they want to eat healthier and at the same time protect the environment. Germans also show an increased awareness of sustainability and climate protection when it comes to travel. About a third of the German population says, that they either already choose trips that incorporate certain environmental standards (8%) or that they will give this more attention in the future (20%) (Reiseanalyse 2009). At the same time, holiday makers do not want to cut short on dearly held vacation pleasures. Thus, sustainability in wellness tourism does not mean giving up heating systems for pools and spas, but reducing detrimental impacts as far as possible and increasingly making use of environmentally friendly materials, renewable energy and sustainable treatments.

The wellness hotel industry focuses on sustainability during the upcoming ITB on March 11th, 2010. Thus, working for the Berlin tradefair organisation company Messe Berlin, the wellness hotel cooperation Kooperation der Wellness-Hotels GmbH will organise the ITB expert board Fachforum Wellness, which will take a closer look at the future of the wellness hotel industry under the aspects of ecological and economical sustainability. Environmentally friendly management of hotels has already been a critical factor of membership with the leading Wellness-Hotels GmbH for 13 years. And so, some member hotels are characterised by especially environmentally friendly and sustainable concepts:

The nature resort Naturresort Schindelbruch in Stolberg in the Harz mountains presents as the first carbon neutral hotel in Middle Germany. The former country hotel is today a wellness hotel with its own water purification system, a pellet heating system, and rooms with furnishing that helps save energy and water. The nature resort also uses 100 percent eco-friendly electricity as well as regional produce. - The wellness hotel Sonnengut in Bad Birnach relies on regional produce for sustainability: Acacia honey for full body massages is delivered from the neighbouring Rottal valley. - The spa hotel Schüle's Gesundheitsresort & Spa in Oberstdorf is the first business to take part in the local climate protection project "Klimaschutz – das Allgäu handelt" ("Protect the climate – the Allgäu takes action"), to improve its carbon footprint.



Interview with Michael Altewischer, CEO Wellness-Hotels & Resorts International

Is the spa a factor in a hotel's entrepreneurial success? How does a spa influence a hotel's image and its turnover?

In a successful health resort, capacity is not only better exploited than the competitors, but it also earns more money. Speaking for our co-operators, the annual average room-booking quota of seventy-four per cent capacity places Wellness-Hotels & Resorts International a remarkable ten per cent above the annual average for a German-speaking holiday hotel.

With regard to the investment/image question, the most important criterion in a health resort is a spa area that is attractive in design and sufficiently generous in scale, run by friendly and qualified staff. The pool, saunas and massage and other body-care cabins make up the mainstay of what the hotel guest perceives as the sought-after product of wellness. What is needed is appealing design in rest, lounge and catering/restaurant areas alike, and clearly structured spa-areas and access ways inside and to the hotel – and ideally, all these with direct views of, or at least with immediate access to, the pool. The areas in the spa section must be of a scale generous enough to avoid uncomfortable/oppressive crowding at all times, even at full capacity.

This is far from saying that the other qualities expected of a good hotel, i.e., of location, rooms, restaurants, service, etc., take second place; on the contrary, in an expensive wellness resort they are an implicit premise.

How does spa provision relate to other key elements of the catering trade such as the food or the fitness centre/gym?

In the pleasant surroundings of a health spa, guests will find everything at hand to ease them into a new sense of wellbeing – the support of friendly hotel staff, stimulating sports activities, professional massage and body-care services, well-equipped fitness facilities, appealing spa, sauna and beauty departments – and not least, an attractive spa cuisine which turns even a slimming course into a gourmet experience. It is the holistic quality of the services and the respect of the individual that lets the guest feel that definitive difference.

How can investors be won for a spa?
What do banks and potential investors want to know
when they finance your spa project?

The highest priority for investors/proprietors and banks alike – it has to pay off. – The hotels in the W-H-I partnership are not supported or sponsored by financial investors. In our Group, the hotelier generally invests her or his own money.

The bottom line is, first, a plan, second, a plan, third, a plan. Only those who have a clear perception of what their guests are looking for, and who have the know-how to realise these wishes and turn them to good entrepreneurial account can win banks and investors over to their cause.



In the rapidly growing competition in the field, however, mistakes made at the planning stage for new spa and wellness areas in a hotel, such as unfavourable siting, badly planned access routes or scale, can imperil all the commitment to wellness; the guest will look for alternatives elsewhere.

The German hotel trade has invested three-digit millions over the past few years in meeting the special demands of this market – in equipping the hotels, but above all in the relevant specialist qualification and social skills of their staff. And a lesson has been learnt - one cannot afford to rest on one's laurels.

What constitutes a first-class spa?

Eager, performance-orientated, highly educated individuals with the corresponding income can be observed to be changing increasingly in their private scale of values. Personal wellbeing is accorded an incomparably higher significance than just a few years ago. The career at all costs, and especially at the cost of one's own health, is out. These people are taking time out regularly to come to themselves (or their partners or companions) again – to 'recharge their batteries' and to be kind to themselves and their health. Behind this resolve lies the insight that it is the only way to maintain one's performance and so, one's success, lastingly.

As guests, they come to stay at our hotels with altogether new expectations of what leisure time should do for them. Holidays are predestined as potential guarantors of measurable and sustained gain in resilience, in vitality and general fitness. The achievement-oriented individual hopes to continue profiting from this kind of break long after returning to the gamut of demands presented by professional and private life. It only follows that an increasing number of men are discovering the health spa. They use the sports facilities by preference, following with a regenerating massage, but also in high demand are mental relaxation programmes.

A first-class spa will be aware of this lifestyle and will reflect it in its facilities and services in ways tailored to the individual guest.

Expectations of and opportunities for Spa-Management from your vantage-point?

The challenge of the future consists in coaching the wellness guest in a holistic way and to help her/him to appreciate the benefits of a healthier and more active lifestyle. Wellness must be understood in its proper meaning, i.e. as the enjoyable option of doing something effective and lasting for one's health. It is the task of the wellness sector to make this 'futures market' more transparent and to offer high-quality, result-oriented services for people who are interested in leading an active and healthy way of life.

What are the prospects for Medical Wellness as a hotel amenity?

To engage in actively promoting medical wellness as a form of preventive medicine implies, to begin with, a closer analysis of the individual risk factors than is common or possible in the day-to-day context of a doctor's surgery. This then enables well-grounded guidelines to be elaborated for a healthy and holistically oriented lifestyle.



Medical wellness thus connects subjective wellbeing, prevention and medically supervised health. But medical wellness can only be understood as a constituent element, within a comprehensive wellness movement as launched in its time by American physicians. They coined the familiar definition that makes personal responsibility for one's health the first consideration and which applies today more than ever – 'Wellness is an active effort for one's own health, with the aim of establishing a durable equilibrium between body, mind and soul, a balanced state of well-being and good health.'

Medical wellness services should never, therefore, be a 'me-too' adjunct to the range of hotel products. It demands the hotelier's absolute respect for the personality and health of the individual guest. This represents a new approach within European health-care structure and calls for service-minded, motivating and aptly qualified staff from the medical sector to put it in place.



Profil der WELLNESS-HOTELS-DEUTSCHLAND

Die Kooperation der WELLNESS-HOTELS GmbH (www.w-h-d.de) ist die 1. Adresse für Wellness-Erlebnisse und steht seit 13 Jahren an der Spitze der deutschsprachigen Wellness-Hotellerie. Mittlerweile gehören ihr neben den ersten Pionieren sorgfältig ausgewählte, meist inhabergeführte deutsche Wellness-Hotels sowie internationale Partner im 4- und 5-Sterne-Bereich an. Unabhängige TÜV-Experten testen die Hotels in puncto Großzügigkeit, Innovation und Nachhaltigkeit des SPA-Bereichs und weiteren Kriterien.

Die Partnerhotels der WELLNESS-HOTELS GmbH bieten hochwertige Wellnesserlebnisse, die begeistern. Ob Detoxing, Ayurveda, geführte Wandertouren, Kosmetik, Golf, Aquafitness, Thalasso, Saunen, Vital- oder Gourmet-Menü, Kuren, Kneipp oder Yoga: Die Erfüllung der individuellen Wünsche hat sich jedes privat geführte Wellness-Hotel dieser Gruppe zur Philosophie gemacht. Mit Persönlichkeit und viel Erfahrung stehen die Hoteliers und ihre besonders gut geschulten Mitarbeiter als Wellness-Experten dem Gast zur Verfügung.

Wellness ist die Balance von Körper, Geist und Seele. So halten die Mitglieder der Kooperation auch geistig-kulturelle Erlebnisse bereit: Klassische Musik, Literatur, typische Mythen aus den Regionen, asiatische Lebenskunst, auch Life-Balance- oder Paar-Coaching bereichern den Wellness-Urlaub innerhalb der Gruppe von WELLNESS-HOTELS GmbH.

Die Mitgliedhotels liegen mitten in der Natur: An der Küste, im Grünen oder in den Bergen. Darüber hinaus gehören dem Qualitäts- und Marketing-verbund sechs Top-Hotels aus Österreich, der Schweiz und den Niederlanden an. Die 50 Mitgliedhotels präsentieren sich auf der Internetseite www.w-h-d.de sowie in einem Katalogmagazin, der bei der Geschäftsstelle angefordert werden kann.

Auszug der Kriterien der WELLNESS-HOTELS GmbH

• **Ausstattung, Gastlichkeit und Servicequalität**

Alle Hotels sind im 4- bzw. 5-Sternebereich angesiedelt und damit in den höchsten Qualitätsstufen, die der Deutsche Hotel- und Gaststättenverband zu vergeben hat. Gastlichkeit spielt eine besondere Rolle.

• **Naturnahe, ruhige Lage**

Wichtig: ungestörte Nachtruhe und die Möglichkeit des Naturerlebnisses. Alle Häuser liegen ruhig und naturnah in oder an einem Park, an einem See oder am Meer.

• **Umweltbewusste Betriebsführung**

Ein Katalog von umweltbewussten Maßnahmen für Hotelbetriebe wird beachtet.

• **Wellness-Vitalküche**

Zu allen Mahlzeiten werden wahlweise auch vollwertige und vegetarische Gerichte angeboten. Mitarbeiter der Küche werden regelmäßig ernährungswissenschaftlich geschult. Ziel ist eine gesunde Gourmet-Küche auf hohem kulinarischem Niveau.



• **Wellness-Bereich**

Umfasst eine großzügig gestaltete, attraktive Badelandschaft (Pool, Sauna etc.), Bewegungsbereiche z.B. mit Fitnessgeräten, einen Entspannungsbereich mit bequemen Ruhemöglichkeiten sowie einen Bereich für Körperpflege mit Angeboten für Kosmetik, Massagen etc., alles unter fachlich qualifizierter Leitung.

Das Haus verfügt über Mitarbeiter mit qualifizierter Ausbildung in einem Gesundheits- und/oder Körperpflege-Beruf. Sie sind verpflichtet, sich regelmäßig praktisch und theoretisch weiterzubilden. Von besonderer Bedeutung sind Herzlichkeit und menschliche Qualität der Gästebetreuung.

• **Erlebnisprogramm**

Für interessierte Gäste steht ein Erlebnisprogramm bereit, z. B. Wanderungen, Ausflüge, Besuch von kulturellen Stätten und Veranstaltungen.

• **Verpflichtung zur Qualitätssicherung**

Alle Mitgliedshotels sind vertraglich verpflichtet, die Wellness-Qualität auf hohem Niveau zu sichern und weiterzuentwickeln.

Hintergrund:

Die Hotelkooperation WELLNESS-HOTELS GmbH (www.w-h-d.de) ist die 1. Adresse für Wellness-Erlebnisse und steht seit 1997 an der Spitze der deutschsprachigen Wellness-Hotellerie. Mittlerweile gehören ihr neben den ersten Pionieren sorgfältig ausgewählte, meist inhabergeführte deutsche Wellness-Hotels sowie internationale Partner im 4- und 5-Sterne-Bereich an. Unabhängige TÜV-Experten testen die Hotels unter den Aspekten Großzügigkeit, Innovation und Nachhaltigkeit des SPA-Bereichs.

Kontakt:

Shushila Pandya
Pressereferentin WELLNESS-HOTELS GmbH
Haroldstr. 14 / 40213 Düsseldorf
Telefon: +49 (0) 211 - 679 69 60
E-Mail: s.pandya@w-h-d.de
www.twitter.com/wellness_welt
www.w-h-d.de/de/wellness-blog-wellness-hotels
www.facebook.com/Wellnesshotels.International



Be well and enjoy

Profile of Wellness-Hotels-& Spa Resorts International

WELLNESS-HOTELS (W-H-I) is the leading German quality and marketing network in the wellness sector. Currently the affiliation comprises fifty quality-tested wellness hotels in the four to five star bracket, most of them owner-operated.

The binding criteria of quality, first elaborated at the foundation in 1997, have been a determining influence on the development of wellness hotels in Germany and continue to point the way ahead today. Amongst the pundits the pioneering work achieved in the field has earned high esteem. Thus the largest German hotel associations, DEHOGA and IHA, adopted the fundamental principles of the W-H-I quality criteria as a national standard for the official definition of a wellness hotel.

Every hotel in the Group is selected according to a comprehensive catalogue of strict individual criteria (details at www.w-h-i.eu proofed quality). The member hotels are bound by contract to refine this quality continually, with extensive employee training and further vocational courses that place the emphasis on the wellness field, to name just one of several measures.

Oriented on international standards, W-H-I's all-round quality management system is augmented by external, independent inspections carried out regularly by trained inspectors from the TÜV Rheinland Group safety standards authority, which appoints them specifically to this task.

Fifty hotels throughout Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands have satisfied the criteria for the much-sought brand to date. All of them meet the minimum standards requirement, i.e.,

- Design, comfort and hospitality:

All WELLNESS-HOTELS belong to the four-to-five star range, the highest quality marks that the 'Deutscher Hotel- und Gaststättenverband' (the German Hotels and Restaurants Association) can award. And all make hospitality a prime consideration.

- **Quiet locations close to nature:**
Two must-haves: night-time peace and the chance to enjoy nature. All our hotels are located in quiet locations close to nature – in or by a park, by a lake or by the sea.
- **Environmentally aware management:**
Members adhere to a package of acknowledged environmental measures for the hotel trade.
- **No-smoking zones:**
Non-smokers can spend time on the premises undisturbed by tobacco smoke. There is a quota of no-smoking rooms; restaurants have no-smoking areas.



- **Vitality cuisine:**
There are wholefood and vegetarian options at all mealtimes. The kitchen staff have dietetic training. The aim is a healthy gourmet cuisine at a high level of culinary art.
- **Wellness & Spa Zone:**
Comprises a spaciouly designed, attractive pool area (pool, sauna, etc.), exercise areas with, for example, exercise apparatus, a relaxation area with comfortable amenities for resting, and a zone for body-care with facilities for beauty treatment, massage, etc., all under trained, expert supervision.
- **Wellness Trainers:**
The hotels employ at least one qualified member of staff with certified training in a health and/or body-care profession. The contract stipulates regular further training in practice and theory. Great store is laid in sincerity and humanity in customer coaching and support.
- **Activities and Events programme:**
For interested guests, there is a programme of activities such as walks, excursions and visits to cultural sites and events.
- **The pledge of quality assurance:**
Member hotels are under contract to assure and further develop wellness qualities to a high standard. Failure to comply with this pledge terminates the hotel's membership.

Background:

The hotel cooperation WELLNESS-HOTELS GmbH (www.w-h-i.eu) is the number one address for wellness experience and has been leading the German speaking wellness hotel industry for thirteen years. In the meantime, carefully selected German wellness hotels, usually run by the owners, have joined the first pioneers along with international four- and five-star partners. Independent experts from the TÜV test the hotels for their generosity, innovative power, and the sustainability of their spa areas, among other criteria.

Press Contact:

Shushila Pandya
WELLNESS-HOTELS GmbH
Haroldstr. 14 / 40213 Düsseldorf/ Germany
Telefon: +49 (0) 211 - 679 69 60
E-Mail: s.pandya@w-h-d.de